

VZCZCXRO4721  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHKH #1881/01 2210424  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 090424Z AUG 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4055  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001881

SIPDIS

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [UG](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: LRA Talks: UN Begins Technical Assistance

1. (SBU) Summary: UNICEF and UN OCHA have begun providing limited support to the talks between Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), currently being mediated by Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) Vice President Riek Machar. UNICEF has sent a protection officer to visit the LRA camps and determine humanitarian needs, supplied some pediatric drugs, and advised Machar on child protection issues. They have had no direct contact with the LRA or its delegation due to the ICC indictments and UN policy, but said attempts to convince the LRA to release some children as a gesture of goodwill had failed. Meanwhile, UN OCHA is exploring ways to provide additional humanitarian technical assistance to the talks. The UN OCHA representatives feel strongly that these talks, and application of traditional reconciliation mechanisms, were a good chance for peace and wanted the United States and the rest of the international community to support the process. End summary.

#### OCHA Reps Pushing for Peace Process

2. (SBU) On August 5, the a representative from OCHA in New York and the head of the OCHA sub-office in Gulu, requested a meeting with the Acting Consul General (A/CG) in Juba to provide an update on OCHA activities and discuss the USG position towards the talks. The OCHA reps believed the talks were a good opportunity for peace and wanted to see how they could provide help to ensure their success, focusing on humanitarian concerns. They feared that the talks should not be allowed to fail "for lack of pens and paper," and explained that they hoped that a UN political affairs representative would come to Juba soon and open the way for more direct involvement.

#### Mato Oput Touted as Reconciliation Tool; ICC a Hindrance

3. (SBU) The A/CG expressed fears that this may just be a stalling tactic to allow the weakened LRA to regroup, as had happened in past negotiations, and said that the United States did not support granting impunity for those who had committed atrocities. The reps explained that, although LRA leader Joseph Kony had been erratic during the talks, they believed this attempt at peace was genuine and that the people of Northern Uganda had decided to support the talks because the needs of a million and a half internally displaced persons (IDPs) should outweigh the need to detain and prosecute five people. The A/CG cautioned that exchanging justice for peace often led to getting neither; the OCHA reps said that the people of Northern Uganda were ready for peace and should be allowed to seek justice in their own way, through a traditional reconciliation process known as "mato oput." They dismissed the idea that non-Acholi victims of the LRA would not accept the validity of this Acholi cleansing ritual. While acknowledging that the ICC indictments had helped push the LRA into talks, they said the ICC was now a major hindrance. Because the ICC prevented top LRA leaders from attending the talks in Juba, they said that the next round of talks may take place in the bush.

4. (SBU) The A/CG explained that the United States remained focused on the well-being of the people of Uganda, providing humanitarian aid, and ensuring that atrocities would not be committed with impunity. Lending international legitimacy to a process that could

not be legitimate was dangerous, so while the USG was following the talks, there were no plans to get involved. The USG would continue to work with the contact group in New York to determine the best way to help northern Uganda.

#### UNICEF: Children are Biggest Victims

15. (SBU) UNICEF has been providing technical advice at Machar's request since shortly after the talks began. While they were not part of the drafting of the talk's agenda -- they would have pushed for child protection as a separate point -- they had been making sure children's issues remained at the fore. Because the majority of LRA fighters, porters, and sex slaves are abducted children, the well-being and reintegration of this group was a major issue. UNICEF has provided pediatric drugs to the mediation team, administered by a nurse that accompanied Machar to the bush, and last week sent a child protection officer (CPO) to evaluate the condition of children at the camps, which are just a few miles over the border from Nabanga, south of Maridi.

16. (SBU) According to the CPO, the health condition of the children from the camps was quite poor. While the officer did not go to the actual camps because they would not cross the border into Congo, just over 100 women and children came to the border to meet with the CPO. Only two of the women were allowed to speak, and no questions were allowed. The children included very scared 7 year-old porters and 9 year-old soldiers who now only knew war as a way of life. When the women spoke, the CPO said it was clear that they had been brainwashed and programmed, like members of a cult, and each woman repeated the exact phrase as if Kony had hit play on a tape recorder. They said they wanted to go home, but would only go if there was peace and they could all go together. Attempts to get Kony to release some of the children as a sign of good will failed. The CPO said the hardest moment came as she was leaving, when one of the 7 year-olds broke ranks, grabbed her hand and begged her to take

KHARTOUM 00001881 002 OF 002

him with her.

HUME